

For Immediate Release

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HERSETH URGES BRAC COMMISSION CHAIRMAN PRICIPI TO VISIT ELLSWORTH AIR FORCE BASE

Letter Cites Ellsworth's Military Value and Strategic Capabilities in Addition to Economic Impact to Rapid City Region

May 13, 2005, Washington, D.C. – Following this morning's announcement that the Department of Defense recommends closure of Ellsworth Air Force Base, U.S. Rep. Stephanie Herseth this afternoon wrote to Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) Commission Chairman Anthony Principi, urging him to visit the Base to see firsthand its value to our national security, specifically with respect the 28th Bomb Wing. The text of Herseth's letter follows:

May 13, 2005

The Honorable Anthony Principi
Base Realignment and Closure Commission
521 South Clark Street
Suite 600
Arlington, VA 22202

Dear Mr. Secretary:

I want to express my disappointment that the Department of Defense recently recommended that Ellsworth Air Force Base in South Dakota be closed. As the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) process continues, I invite you and other members of the BRAC Commission to visit Ellsworth Air Force Base (AFB) - home of the B-1 Bomber and the 28th Bomb Wing.

Ellsworth AFB and the B-1 Bomber are crucial to the military and the economic livelihood of the Rapid City area. As Lead Wing for the Aerospace Expeditionary Force, the 28th Bomb Wing at Ellsworth Air Force Base played a decisive role in Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom. As they did in Kosovo and Afghanistan, the B-1 and her crews from Ellsworth AFB performed superbly. They once again demonstrated that they are the backbone of America's bomber fleet and have fulfilled their missions admirably.

It seems very shortsighted to me to now put all of the Air Force's B-1 bombers at one air force base. Ellsworth is strategically located and is not threatened by urban encroachment or congested air space. We must protect our bomber force and ensure that we don't put all our eggs in one basket. Ellsworth AFB has many positive aspects crucial to maintaining a strong military and a formidable long-range bomber fleet. Ellsworth AFB is a premier installation with a proven record. In times of peace and battle, Ellsworth AFB has stood ready to answer the call to duty.

I look forward to working with the BRAC Commission to show that Ellsworth AFB is strategic to our national defense. I encourage you to contact me if I can be of any assistance as you begin to review and consider the Secretary of Defense's recommendations. In addition, again, I invite you and the Commission to personally visit Ellsworth AFB and see what makes Ellsworth AFB a premier and viable military base.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Herseth
Member of Congress